



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

As delivered by Deputy Permanent Representative Douglas Davidson
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 25, 2004

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States also very warmly welcomes Ambassador Pais to the Permanent Council today. We very much value his efforts leading the OSCE Mission in Skopje. We are also heartened to see that an old and valued colleague can escape the confines of the Hofburg, return to the real world, and succeed in such an admirable fashion.

Mr. Chairman, in just under three weeks Macedonia will vote to elect a new President. Like others around this table, we are saddened by the need for the vote owing to the untimely, tragic death of President Trajkovski.

The United States fully expects that the April 14 presidential election in Macedonia will be conducted in a free and fair manner, and is pleased that ODIHR will be able to deploy observers for this important event.

Last week's violence in Kosovo, which we have condemned in the strongest terms, has marked an unfortunate setback for efforts to promote a multi-ethnic society there. But we must continue with our work to bring about ethnic reconciliation and protect all minority communities in Kosovo.

We fully concur with Ambassador Pais' view that there is no indication that violence to the north will spillover into Macedonia, and we laud his proactive efforts to send confidence-building monitors into former crisis areas during the recent violence across the border. This is exactly what we have in mind when we think about the role of field missions can play in fostering calm and stability in the OSCE region. The credit must also go to Macedonia's citizenry which reacted calmly and responsibly to the problem to their north. It is clear to us that Macedonia's stability is due to effective political leadership and the significant progress made in implementing the Framework Agreement.

The Government of Macedonia and its citizens continue to make progress toward full implementation of that Framework Agreement. The desire for progress clearly has eclipsed calls for ethnic struggle in that country.

Several issues however still remain outstanding before the OSCE's efforts in Macedonia can be considered complete. The decentralization process must move forward, and key legislation, which includes the Law on Territorial Organization and the Law on Local Finance, needs to be enacted promptly following the presidential elections. Judicial reform, and efforts to combat organized crime and corruption must also be stepped up.

We believe, Mr. Chairman, that through the efforts of Ambassador Pais and his Mission, the OSCE can facilitate the efforts of the Government of Macedonia and its people to achieve all these goals—and more. For example, we especially value the Mission's efforts to provide basic police training to Macedonian military border guards that soon will be transitioning to the Interior Ministry. The OSCE in this instance has found an important niche, unfulfilled by any other regional or international organization, and it is providing an exceptional service.

In closing, please allow me to thank Ambassador Pais, and through him, the staff of his mission for their dedication to engagement based upon mutually reinforcing cooperation and respect.

I thank you,